

As a new immigrant from Colombia with limited English, Pena said, she was treated unfairly by her former employers in Potomac.

“When I was working there, I had to work up to 12 hours a day, six days a week, and only got overtime three times in two years,” she said.

Since then, Pena has become an advocate for other women in similar situations. “This is important because now we have a base for our rights,” she said.

The legislation does not include requirements for vacation, sick leave and holidays for domestic workers, as requested by workers’ advocates.

“The legislation is a huge success for domestic workers, however, there is room to improve in other areas, including human rights,” said Gustavo Torres, executive director of immigrant advocacy group Casa of Maryland.

Brad Botwin, director of Help Save Maryland, which opposes illegal immigration, testified against the bill in February, calling it “the female version of the day labor centers.”

“Where the county is skirting the law and forcing employers to sign contracts with illegal aliens, the day labor centers do the same thing,” he said after Tuesday’s vote. “The county turns a blind eye to see whether these workers are legal, and we think it’s a disgrace.”



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